

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5177

AMEMBASSY BONN

INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION BERLIN

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

USAREUR FOR POLAD

USAFE FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 FRANKFURT 6231

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: OCTOBER 3 BUNDESTAG ELECTION - A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT
FROM FRANKFURT

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN THE FRG'S CENTRAL REGION OF HESSEN,
RHINELAND PALATINATE AND THE SAAR IT LOOKS AS IF THE CDU WILL
GAIN AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SPD/FDP NATIONAL COALITION
PARTIES BUT LOCAL OBSERVERS STILL DOUBT THAT THE
CONSERVATIVE TREND WILL BE ENOUGH TO WIN FOR THE
CDU/CSU AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE
COUNTRY. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST UNCERTAIN ELECTIONS IN A
LONG TIME. SOME LOCAL FACTORS FAVOR THE CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATS IN THIS PARTICULAR REGION. POLITICIANS ARE
NERVOUS ABOUT UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS JUST PRIOR TO
OCTOBER 3. THE FDP WILL BE LUCKY TO HOLD ITS OWN
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IN THIS AREA. THE LEFT AND RIGHT EXTREMIST PARTIES

ARE ONLY A NUISANCE FACTOR. END SUMMARY

1. AS THE HOT PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN LOOKING TO THE OCT 3 GENERAL ELECTION GETS UNDERWAY IN THIS CENTRAL PORTION OF THE FRG THE PREVAILING VIEW AMONG POLITICIANS AND OTHER OBSERVERS IN HESSEN, THE RHINELAND PALATINATE AND THE SAARLAND IS THAT A) IT WILL BE A VERY CLOSE RUN THING AND B) THE ODDS VERY SLIGHTLY FAVOR THE SPD/FDP COALITION TO SUCCEED ITSELF IN BONN BUT WITH A REDUCED MARGIN. (THERE ARE A FEW CDU POLITICIANS WHO CLAIM THE LATEST TRENDS SHOW THAT THE CDU/CSU WILL ACHIEVE A NARROW ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.) AMONG POLITICIANS OF BOTH MAJOR PARTIES AND THE FDP THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF NERVOUSNESS THAT UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE LAST TWO WEEKS BEFORE OCT 3 COULD WELL UPSET PREVIOUS CALCULATIONS. REAPPORTIONMENT OF ELECTION DISTRICTS ADDS A FURTHER ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY.

2. IN THIS REGION, AS ELSEWHERE IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, CERTAIN GENERAL FACTORS FAVOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND BY EXTENSION THE FDP COALITION PARTNER. THESE FAVORABLE ELEMENTS ARE A) THE PERSONAL REPUTATION OF CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT AND THE RESPECT IN WHICH HE IS HELD. B) RELUCTANCE TO TRADE THE KNOWN FOR SOMETHING NEW AND C) A SENSE OF PRIDE TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT'S "MODELL DEUTSCHLAND" SLOGAN HAS SUCCESSFULLY APPEALED. ON THE OTHER HAND THE CDU IN THIS AREA APPEARS TO US TO BE A MODEST NET GAINER BY VIRTUE OF THE RECENT AND CURRENT DIFFICULTIES IN RELATIONS WITH THE GDR AND ESPECIALLY THE BORDER INCIDENTS. WE SENSE IN THIS REGION A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INDIFFERENCE TO THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AS A PARTY AGGRAVATED BY THE LOCAL SITUATION DESCRIBED IN PARA 3 BELOW AND NOT OFFSET BY WIDE DISPLAYS OF WILLY BRANDT'S FATHERLY IMAGE. THE CDU SLOGAN "FREEDOM INSTEAD OF SOCIALISM" HAS A GOOD DEAL OF ATTRACTION PARTICULARLY FOR THE SWING VOTE AND FOR THOSE WHO REGARD THE SPD'S RADICALS ESPECIALLY IN SOUTH HESSEN WITH DEEP SUSPICION. THE FACT THAT THERE WILL BE ABOUT ONE MILLION LESS FIRST-TIME VOTERS

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IN 1976 COMPARED TO 1972 ALSO FAVORS A CONSERVATIVE TREND. CONTRARY TO EARLIER EXPECTATIONS THE ECONOMY IS NOT AN ISSUE AT THIS TIME, AND SO FAR IT LOOKS AS IF BOTH SIDES ARE GOING TO BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT MAKING IT ONE.

3. LOOKING AT THE THREE LAENDER IN THIS DISTRICT THIS IS HOW IT SHAPES UP AS OF NOW:

A. HESSEN WITH ITS 47 DEPUTIES IN THE BUNDESTAG AT THIS TIME (SPD-23; CDU-19; FDP-5) IS OF COURSE THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA AND THE OUTCOME IS IN DOUBT. THE CRISTIAN DEMOCRATS IN KEEPING WITH THE PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER OF ALFRED DREGGER - CDU CHAIRMAN - GOT OFF TO A FAST START. IN HESSEN THE CDU PRESENTS AN IMAGE OF A UNIFIED PARTY. THEY GIVE EVERY INDICATION OF CONTINUING A HARD-HITTING, WELL ORGANIZED AND AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN RIGHT DOWN TO THE WIRE. DREGGER HIMSELF IS SCHEDULED FOR ABOUT 45 PERSONAL APPEARANCES BETWEEN AUG 1 AND A SEPT 30 FINALE IN THE NORTHERN PORTION OF THE STATE. (DREGGER IS ALSO SCHEDULED FOR ABOUT A DOZEN OUT OF STATE APPEARANCES.) OTHER CDU/CSU HEAVYWEIGHTS INCLUDING KOHL, BIEDENKOPF, CARSTENS AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT STRAUSS ARE ALL SCHEDULED FOR REPEATED PERFORMANCES IN HESSEN. PRESENT PLANS CALL FOR NEIGHBORING BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG'S HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL MINISTER PRESIDENT FILBINGER TO SUPPORT THE HESSEN CDU'S FINAL EFFORT IN SOUTH HESSEN (FRANKFURT, HANAU, OFFENBACH, BERGSTRASSE) ON SEPT 30. ONE OF KOHL'S FINAL APPEARANCES IS PLANNED FOR WETZLAR ON OCT 1. IN ITS INITIAL PHASE, THE CDU IN HESSEN HAS HIT HARD AT THE ALLEGED CONFUSION AND INADEQUACIES OF THE SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. A SUBJECT ALWAYS GOOD FOR AROUSING EMOTION AMONG CONCERNED PARENTS - AND THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM.

THE SPD IN TURN IS OFF TO A SLOW AND DEFENSIVE START. WHILE THE TRADITIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SPD'S MODERATE SILENT MAJORITY AND THE PARTY'S LEFT-WING RADICALS (WHOSE ANCESTRAL HOME IS FRANKFURT) CONFIDENTIAL

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HAVE BEEN MUTED FOR THE TIME BEING - AS THEY USUALLY ARE IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS CAMPAIGNS - THE PARTY GIVES AN IMPRESSION OF DRIFT, WEAKNESS AND FATIGUE AT THE TOP OF THE LOCAL LEADERSHIP. THE SPD CHAIRMAN ALBERT OSSWALD IS CLEARLY AT THE END OF HIS POLITICAL CAREER. HE IS UNDER FIRE BECAUSE OF THE HESSISCHE LANDSEBANK AFFAIR (FRANKFURT A-41, MARCH 1976). HE WILL BE IN THE U.S. AND ABSENT FROM THE LOCAL SCENE FOR A TEN-DAY PERIOD BEGINNING SEPT 11. FRANKFURT

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 FRANKFURT 6231

LORD MAYOR RUDI ARNDT IS REGARDED WITH SUSPICION NOT ONLY BY THE OPPOSITION BUT BY A CONSIDERABLE SEGMENT OF HIS OWN PARTY NOT TO MENTION THE HESSEN FDP WHOSE CHAIRMAN HEINZ HERBERT KARRY WILL HARDLY SEPAK TO HIM.

NEVERTHELESS, WITH A GOOD PART OF THE ELECTORATE LOCKED INTO THE SPD BY HABIT AND TRADITION IT IS PROBLEMATICAL WHETHER THE CDU WILL SUCCEED IN ITS ANNOUNCED AIM OF REPEATING IN A BUNDESTAG ELECTION ITS SUCCESS IN THE 1974 LANDTAG ELECTION AND BECOMMING HESSEN'S LARGEST PARTY IN A NATIONAL RATHER THAN LOCAL CONTEST. TWO INTERESTING CONTESTS OCCUR IN FRANKFURT'S CONSTITUENCY 140 AND IN NEARBY HOCHTAUNUS CONSTITUENCY 135. THE DIRECT CANDIDATE IN THE FORMER USED TO BE FRG MINISTER OF DEFENSE GEORG LEBER WHO
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RELINQUISHED HIS DIRECT CANDIDACY UNDER PRESSURE TO SPD LEFT-WINGER KARSTEN VOIGT. (NOTE: LEBER HEADS THE SPD RESERVE LIST AND IS THUS ASSURED OF ELECTION ANYWAY.) VOIGT IS OPPOSED BY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT HEINZ RIESENHUBER WHO - CONTRARY TO EARLIER EXPECTATION - IS MAKING A GOOD FIGHT AND IS THREATENING TO TAKE THE DISTRICT AWAY FROM THE SPD. IN THE HOCHTAUNUS WHERE A PREVIOUS DEAL BY WHICH FDP VOTERS CAST THEIR FIRST VOTES FOR THE SPD NO LONGER OBTAINS THE CDU ALSO STANDS A CHANCE OF CAPTURING THE DISTRICT FROM THE SPD. FINALLY, SPD SOURCES HAVE INDICATED TO US CONCERN THAT CONSTITUENCY 147 (BERGSTRASSE) MAY ALSO BE LOST TO THE CDU. ALTHOUGH CONTESTS MAY BE CLOSE IN A FEW OTHER IDSTRICTS, THE BULD OF REMAINING SUCCESSFUL CDU CANDIDATES ARE LIKELY TO COME FROM THE RESERVE LIST. IT WILL TAKE A SHIF OF ONLY TWO CANDIDATES FROM THE SPD TO THE CDU TO EVEN THE BUNDESTAG REPRESENTATION OF THE TWO LARGE PARTIES AND ONE MORE SEAT FOR THE CDU WILL ACCOMPLISH DREGGER'S OBJECTIVE OF BECOMMING HESSEN'S LARGEST PARTY.

B. IN THE RHINELAND PALATINATE NOW WITH 31 SEATS IN THE BUNDESTAG (CDU-15; SPD-14, FDP-2) THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE LIKELY TO MAKE SOME OVERALL GAINS NOT ONLY IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE GENERAL TREND BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF PRIDE IN THE FACT THAT IS IS THEIR MAN, HELMUTH KOHL, WHO IS THE PARTY'S NATIONAL LEADER AND ITS CANDIDATE FOR CHANCELLOR. WITH THE DEPARTURE OF DROESCHER TO BONN AS NATIONAL SPD TREASURER THE RP SOCIAL DOMOCRATS LACK A KNOWN LOCAL PERSONALITY TO LEAD THEIR PARTY'S CAMPAIGN. ONE DISTRICT THE CDU IS LIKELY TO GAIN IS CONSTITUENCY 148 (NEUWIED) WHICH RP MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR HEINZ SCHWARZ IS TRYING TO RECAPTURE FROM THE SPD WHICH GAINED IT IN 1972. ANOTHER INTERESTING CONTEST IS CONSTITUENCY 159 (LUDWIGSHAFEN) WHERE KOHL IS RUNNING AS HIS PARTY'S CANDIDATE FOR DIRECT ELECTION. IN 1972 LUDWIGSHAFEN WENT SPD WITH 58.9 PERCENT OF THE VOTE CAST. THE CURRENT PROGNOSIS IS THAT KOHL WILL OT SUCCEED IN TAKING THIS HIGHLY INDUSTRIAL SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CONFIDENTIAL

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STRONGHOLD BUT THAT HE WILL CERTAINLY CUT INTO THE MAJORITY BY WHICH THE SPD HOLD IT. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE SPD SETBACK IN THE BADEN-WUERTEMBERG LANDTAG ELECTION IN MANNHEIM JUST ACROSS THE RHINE EARLIER THIS YEAR A COMPLETE UPSET IS NOT TOTALLY OUT OF THE QUESTION. (NOTE: SINCE KOHL HEADS THE RP RESERVE LIST HE IS OF COURSE ASSURED A SEAT IN THE BUNDESTAG

REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME IN LUDWIGSHAFEN.)

C. GERMANY'S SMALLEST AND YOUNGEST FEDERAL STATE, THE SAAR, IS NOT LIKELY TO SEE A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN ITS PRESENT POLITICAL COMPLEION IN WHICH THE CDU AS WELL AS SPD EACH SEND FOUR MEMBERS TO THE BUNDESTAG AND NONE FOR THE FDP. CLOSE RACES ARE LIKELY TO OCCUR IN SAARLOUIS AND SANKT VENDEL BOTH OF WHICH WENT TO THE CDU IN 1972 BUT BY SMALL MARGINS.

4. AT THIS STAGE WE BELIEVE THE FDP IN THIS AREA WILL BE FORTUNATE TO HOLD ITS OWN AND, EXCEPT PERHAPS IN THE SAAR, COULD WELL TAKE SOME LOSSES WHICH WOULD BENEFIT PRIMARILY THE CDU. THE FOURTH PARTY (AVP) REMAINS A MINOR THORN IN THE SIDE OF THE CDU SINCE IT COULD TAKE SOME VOTES AWAY FROM THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WHICH IS TROUBLESOME GIVEN THE CLOSENESS OF THE CONTEST. HOWEVER, LATEST DEVELOPMENTS SUGGEST THAT THE AVP MIGHT FOLD ITS TENT AND STEAL AWAY INTO THE NIGHT BEFORE OCT 3. AT A MINIMUM RECENT PRONOUNCEMENTS BY AVP LEADERS SUGGEST SUCH A LACK OF CONFIDENCE AS TO MAKE THE AVP A VERY UNATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO THE VOTER. THE FAR LEFT AND RIGHT-WING SPLINTER PARTIES (KBW, DKP AND NPD) ARE NO MORE THAN NUISANCE FACTORS BUT CONSTITUTE POSSIBLE SOURCES OF EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE SPD (I.E. KBW AND DKP) AND THE CDU (I.E. NPD) RESPECTIVELY. LEHMANN

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